

Brown- Parrott House
E side State Rte. 680
Crozet
Albemarle County
Virginia

HABS VA-992

HABS,
VA,
2 CROZ.V,
1-

ADDENDUM
FOLLOWS...

REDUCED DRAWINGS

Addendum to
Brown-Parrott House
Crozet vicinity
Albemarle County
Virginia

HABS No. VA-992

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WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, D. C. 20240

HABS
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HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

BROWN-PARROTT HOUSE

HABS No. VA-992

Location: Near Crozet, Albemarle County, Virginia
overlooking Beaver Creek Reservoir.
U.T.M. Coordinates: 17.70572.421656
(Crozet, Va. Quadrangle).

Present Owner: Hazel M. Abell.

Present Status: Unoccupied and unused.

Present Condition: Derelict.

Statement of Significance: The house is one of the relatively few survivors of Eighteenth-Century architecture (ca. 1782) in western Albemarle County and is an excellent example of a vernacular, hall-parlor house, exhibiting first-rate craftsmanship and fine, Federal-Period detailing. Its original owner, John Brown, was a member of the notable Brown Family whose numerous members were instrumental in the early settlement of this area.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

Ownership and Physical History.

Although the Brown family figures prominently and frequently in the histories of the early settlement of western Albemarle County, and especially around that area with which this project dealt, the John Brown for whom the BROWN-PARROTT HOUSE was constructed receives no mention. Reasonable probability and the inter-connection of three documents establish his relationship (see Appendix I): The will (1762) of Benjamin Brown (Senior) and its bequest of 1000 acres to his daughter Agnes; the will (1781) of Benjamin Brown of Hanover County, Virginia (son of Benjamin, senior) and its designation of his son John as executor of his Albemarle County lands along with brothers Benajah and Bazalleel Brown; and finally, the deed (1796) of John Brown and his wife Mary to John Mullins conveying 1000 acres "formerly belonging to Benjamin Brown Senr. decd. who gave the tract of land to his daughter Agness Mullins."

It is plausible to assume that upon the death of his father in 1781, John Brown decided to quit Hanover County and with his recent inheritance to settle in Albemarle: hence the purchase on 2 January 1782 of almost 400 acres from Isaac Harding and Robert Richerson. Construction of the BROWN-PARROTT HOUSE probably began almost immediately: as Tax Records (see Appendix II) for 1782 show John Brown's 400 acre tract valued at 3 shillings an acre while by 1787 (the next year for which all individuals are listed and per acre values given) the per-acre value had increased to 4 shillings 10 pence, most likely a reflection of building improvements added.

An 1805 deed (DB15-223, see Appendix IV) from John and Mary Brown conveys 150 acres (of the original 400 tract) to their son Elijah. Mentioned are five other sons: Tarlton, Wilson, John, Edmond, and Garland. And reference is made to the saw mill and saw-mill pond on the property.

Taxes on the property in 1819 were paid by "John Brown, Jr., of Orange County" and thereafter merely by John Brown of Albemarle. It is possible that the son John, Jr., moved in with his family to operate the farm/plantation of his parents. Alterations and additions that appear to date from this time might have been to accommodate the additional family.

John Brown, Senior, may have died in early 1822: as a deed dated 9 January 1822 (DB 22-460) is from John and Mary, his wife; while in a 5 February 1822 deed (DB 22-531), John Brown, probably the son, purchases from Nelson and Williamson

Brown "all their intrest in a certain tract or parcel of land whereon their mother Mrs. Mary Brown now lives... that was assigned... Mary Brown as her dower right..." No will of John Brown, Senior, is recorded in Albemarle County.

John Brown sold in 1823 to Garland Brown (his brother?) who in turn sold two years to Wilson Roberts, thus ending association with the house of the Brown name.

Wilson Roberts ownership began a period of financial and legal troubles connected with the property, ending with its purchase by Charles H. Parrott in 1849. Known by the title of Captain C. H. Parrott after the Civil War, he lived in the house apparently until his death in 1897 when it passed by will to the children of his deceased daughter, Sarah E. Kemper. A legal battle among the Kemper heirs resulted in the property's sale by court order in 1910 to J. E. Sandridge.

In 1919 Sandridge sold to James David Maupin, and it was from his heir that Percy R. Abell and his wife Hazel M. Abell purchased the property in 1945. Hazel Abell presently holds title by survivorship.

Physical history is partially conjectural. A photograph taken ca. 1920 (Photo 38) looks toward the south corner of the house from the south and shows a portion of the house in the background. The shed addition of probably ca. 1820 is partially visible along the SE side: of this only the chimney remains. As for the structure off the SW end and its shed-roofed connector, there remains no visible evidence today and its interum of existence cannot even be conjectured.

Chain of Title.

Explanation of Methodology: Chaining title for the BROWN-PARROTT HOUSE was of particular difficulty because of poor property descriptions and frequent fluctuations in parcel size. The completeness and accuracy of the below series of transfers was determined to the satisfaction of the researcher by extensive cross-checking between deeds and tax records; by examination of numerous other property sales and acquisitions by John Brown, his successors, and his neighbors; by comparison of metes and bounds in most of Brown's numerous transactions; and finally by reconstruction and location of the tracts conveyed in two key deeds (See Appendix III)

Location of Records: Transfers reference Deed Books (DB) or Will Books (WB), by book number and page. Records are located in the Records Room of the Clerk of the Court, Albemarle County Courthouse, Charlottesville, Virginia.

2 January 1782, DB 7-529.

To: John Brown.

From: Isaac Harding and Elizabeth Harding (ux.) and Robert Richerson and Catharine Richerson (ux.).

295 acres, on Beaver Creek from Harding

100 acres, adjacent above from Richerson.

5 February 1822, DB 22-531.

To: John Brown (the son of the above?)

From: Nelson Brown and Williamson Brown.

"All their interest in a certain tract or parcel of land whereon their mother Mrs. Mary Brown now lives containing by a late survey 219 acres being the same land that was assigned the said Mary Brown as her dower right..."

This undivided interest in said land consisted of "two equal parts one of thirteen."

11 September 1823, DB 24-288.

To: Garland Brown.

From: John Brown.

200 acres, the same on which John Brown now resides.

29 May 1824, DB 24-289. An instrument of assent by Mary Brown, wife of John Brown, to the above deed.

27 September 1825, DB 26-362.

To: Wilson Roberts.

From: Garland Brown.

210 acres.

- 1 July 1836, DB 34-64. Deed of Trust.
To: V. W. Southall, trustee.
From: Garland Brown.
210 acres (The same above, Brown claiming an equity of redemption), in trust to secure a debt to Benjamin Wood.
- 8 May 1838, DB 37-316.
To: Benjamin Wood.
From: V. W. Southall, Garland Brown, Fayette Kirby and Martha Kirby (ux.), John W. Roberts, and William R. Roberts.
194 3/4 acres, on the waters of Beaver Creek. Sold at auction for debts due Benjamin Wood and Wilson Roberts from Garland Brown
- 14 September 1844, DB 42-162.
To: John J. Winn.
From: Benjamin Wood and Jane L. Wood (ux.).
361 acres.
- 26 December 1848, DB 46-410. Deed of Trust.
To: Drury Wood, trustee.
From: John J. Winn.
The tract purchased from Benjamin Wood, in trust.
- 21 September 1849, DB 47-525.
To: Charles H. Parrott.
From: Drury Wood, trustee for John J. Winn.
363 acres, at auction for insolvency.
- 2 August 1897, WB 30-307. Will of C. H. Parrott, dated 8 July 1897.
To: The children of "my deceased daughter Sarah E. Kemper."
From: C. H. Parrott
1/4 of his estate.
- 17 March 1902, DB 123-249.
To: C. M. Kemper.
From: L. T. Hanckel, executor of C. H. Parrott;
W. H. Kemper, B. F. Kemper, Mary T. Kemper,
Fannie R. K. Bibb and W. B. Bibb (vir),
B. P. Kemper, and Eugene G. Kemper
(the children of Sarah E. Kemper and C. M. Kemper (vir.)).
135 1/2 acres, Lot #1 of the estate of C. H. Parrott--
"the Home Place"--with dwelling and outbuildings.

13 May 1910, DB 143-14.

To: J. E. Sandridge.

From: W. Gilmer Dunn, Special Commissioner, under Circuit Court order dated 2 May 1910 in the case of C. M. Kemper, B. F. Kemper, and Eugene G. Kemper versus B. P. Kemper and Elizabeth G. Kemper (ux.), Mary T. Kemper, and Fannie R. K. Bibb and W. B. Bibb (vir).

135 1/2 acres.

25 October 1919, DB 171-319.

To: James David Maupin.

From J. E. Sandridge and Florence D. Sandridge (ux.).

135 1/2 acres.

5 November 1942, DB 255-494.

To: E. Hunter Maupin.

From: E. Hunter Maupin, executor of the estate of James David Maupin; with Ruby Maupin Carruth and Ella Mildred Maupin consenting.

134 1/3 acres (1.18 acres off, DB 221-213).

28 April 1945, DB 262-548.

To: Percy R. Abell and Hazel M. Abell (ux.)

From: E. Hunter Maupin and Ruth A. Paulin (ux.).

132 acres (2 1/3 acres off, DB 257-32).

(5 April 1962, DB 376-385.

To: County of Albemarle.

From: Percy R. Abell and Hazel M. Abell.

74 3/4 acres for Beaver Creek Reservoir.)

PART II ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION

General Statement and Description.

The BROWN-PARROTT HOUSE is one of relatively few surviving examples of Eighteenth-Century structures of the western Albemarle County "frontier." Despite its overall simplicity and somewhat ruinous state, the house is notable for the quality of workmanship and fineness of Federal-Period detail. Attesting to its sturdiness is the fact that it has outlived at least two later additions and continues to stand despite the loss of considerable foundation support. The house at present, however, is in danger of imminent destruction from neglect and from the owner's desire to construct a new dwelling on the site.

The BROWN-PARROTT HOUSE is a simple, vernacular, hall-parlor-type structure of one-and-one-half storeys over a high basement. A single-pile, two-over-two room plan is contained in a rectangular form whose long dimension presents a three-bay elevation, with symmetrically located windows flanking an off-center door. Large exterior chimneys of brick stand one against each gable end.

Exterior Description.

Overall Dimensions: The basic structure measures 36'4" by 20'5". From sill bottom to roof peak totals approximately 23', while to cornice soffit only is 12'7".

Foundations: Foundation/Basement walls are constructed of field stone, semi-dressed and dry-laid. Thickness averages 20" with about 1"+ variation. Wall height from exterior ground level to bottom of sill ranges from approximately 2'10" along the NE elevation to 4'10" at the SW chimney. All of the SW wall and much of the NW have collapsed.

Exterior Wall Sheathing: Walls are covered with original beaded weatherboard on three sides and from window-top level to cornice on SE elevation (original window-tops extended into the bottom board remaining, see photo). Below this level, SE elevation is covered with Twentieth-Century weatherboards that replaced the lath-and-plaster interior sealing of the early shed addition.

Structural System: Construction is post and stud framing, with diagonal down bracing and L-section posts at corners and at intersection of interior partition with exterior walls. Joints are mortise-and-tenon, pegged. The structure is relatively sound, with the exception of some termite damage--major in a portion of the NW sill, minor along part of SE sill.
Sills: 12" by 12", hewn, full-length, lapped at corners.
Joists, first floor: Average 4" by 7 1/2", apparently hewn about 8" square and sawn in half. A beam 12" by 12" supports the interior partition, while 11"-by-11" and 7"-by-10" beams support NE and SW hearths respectively. Joists are roughly 2' on center and mortised into the sill.
Joists, second floor: Those that are exposed average 3" by 8" and lie 2" on center.
Studs: Those exposed average 3" by 4", sawn.
Roof rafters: 3" by 4", sawn, with lapped-and-pegged ridge-joint.
Rafter ties/ceiling joists: 3" by 4", sawn, let in and pegged to rafters.

Porches/Stoops: None of what were three porches/stoops/stairs has survived. Their original form is unknown.

Chimneys: Two massive exterior chimneys stand one against each gable end. Construction is brick, laid in Flemish bond with random glazed headers. Where interior brick is visible because of decay, it consists of salmon or low-fired brick. A small diamond diaper, mostly of glazed headers, decorates each chimney between the stepped shoulders just below the free standing stacks. The SW chimney is the larger of the two, has only a single set of shoulders, and stands on a 16" stone foundation. Its three flues serve basement (kitchen) parlor and SW chamber fireplaces. The NE chimney has two sets of shoulders and has two flues serving hall and NE chamber fireplaces. It is apparently founded only on stone slabs laid on the ground and is leaning away from the house about 4" to 5" (measured at top).

Openings, Doorways: The original house was entered through three doors at first floor level and at least one to the basement/kitchen. One door entered the parlor just to the southeast of the SW chimney. Basement access was apparently just below. Two other doors gave access to the hall, opposite one another, and off-center to the northeast in the NW and SE sides respectively. A fourth first floor entry, into the parlor on the SE side, was apparently created for interior passage between parlor and the early shed addition. Structural evidence indicates that it replaced a window that balanced another on the NW side. Architrave molding around this door differs from all others and matches only that around the west window, SW facade, also apparently later. No doors remain in the house.

Openings, Windows: First floor windows originally totaled five: two symmetrically placed on each long facade with the fifth located to the southeast of the NE chimney. As indicated above, at the time of the early addition, a window was added to the parlor just to the northwest of the chimney, a door replaced the parlor SE window and the hall SE window was blocked. Although all the first floor windows have been shortened and replaced by modern sash (now largely gone itself) ample evidence exists in the form of remaining original weatherboard openings, interior lintel mouldings still in place, and original sash stored in the house to determine that first floor windows were nine-over-nine-light, double-hung-sash type. Second floor window openings about the chimney stacks just above the shoulders in each gable end. The one remaining window here is a two-over-two-light casement type. The two remaining basement windows are found in the SE elevation beneath the original first-floor-window locations.

Roof: The roof is a medium-pitch gable covered at present with modern, corrugated-type metal. The only early photograph uncovered (probably ca. 1920) shows what appears to be a wood shingle roof.

Roof Trim: Eaves are finished with a simple boxed cornice with a delicate molding below the soffit.

Interior Description.

Floor Plans: The basement plan appears to have been at least two room, as notching in the beam supporting the interior, first-floor partition would seem to indicate a basement partition at that point. The large fireplace here points to a kitchen in the SW section of the basement with possibly storage or servants quarters in the remainder.

First floor: Two rooms, a hall roughly 19'4" square to the northeast and a parlor 19'4" by 15'6" to the southwest.

Second floor: Two chambers measuring 12' by 14'6" and 19'6" by 14'4", separated by a small stairhall and closet.

Stairway: The stairway descends boxed and to the parlor side of the first floor partition. Fourteen risers bring the stair from the second floor level to a landing against the SE wall, from whence it descends another five risers along that SE wall in both directions into each of the hall and parlor rooms. Treads of these two runs are wider along the wall causing a slightly splayed effect. A simple hand rail is provided in the steep run from landing to second floor. There is no interior communication with the basement.

Flooring: Flooring is of 1" tongue-and-groove pine approximately 5" in width.

Wall and Ceiling Finish: Basement wall is rough stone, possibly whitewashed originally. First floor rooms are plaster on split lath for ceilings and above the chair rail, with horizontal, wide board wainscot in the parlor and raised-panel wainscot in the hall. A base-board finishes the parlor wainscot only. The NE chamber, second floor, is entirely sealed with 13" + wide, single-bead board running horizontally. The longest of these measure 17'9". The smaller SW chamber is plastered except for a small segment of board sealing between the door and NW wall. A paint analysis would be required to determine the original color scheme, which, while probably the only coat of paint ever applied, has weathered and or faded beyond accurate description.

Doorways, Doors: A single doorway, centered, provides passage between hall and parlor. Two doorways one to either side of the stair landing served to close off the stairway. Both these were hung on pintels. Evidence on the interior molding of the SW exterior door of the parlor suggests H or HL hinges. Small doorways opened immediately to right and left into the second floor chambers. The top NW corner of each of these passages is clipped by the roof slant. No doors survive.

Interior trim: Windows and doors are surrounded by a simple but delicate Federal-Style molding. Molding of a later date surrounds the window and door additions. Both first floor fireplace mantels are missing. The second-floor SW chamber has only a shelf supported on two long triangular brackets over the fireplace, while the NE chamber retains what is probably its original mantel with shelf.

Hardware: The only remaining original hardware are the two driven pintels from which hung one of the stair-landing doors.

Fireplaces: The basement fireplace was large enough to have been used for cooking and probably served the kitchen. Its lintel (probably arched) and much of its facing brick has disappeared. On the first floor, both fireplaces have been rebuilt smaller, and as their newer design corresponds with that of the now free-standing chimney of the early addition, it seems reasonable to assume that this alteration may have been contemporary with the addition. Decay of the parlor fireplace has left the older and larger fireplace with arched lintel clearly visible. Both second-floor fireplaces are small and shallow and have arched lintels.

Site and Surroundings.

Orientation and General Setting: The long axis of the house orients along a line bearing (true) North 52° 30' East. The setting is on a hill overlooking Beaver Creek Reservoir (created ca. 1965) to the south and west, and with a panoramic view of the Blue Ridge Mountains to the west and north. The original approach is from the northeast via a well-worn road trace connecting to the White Hall Road (Brown's Gap Turnpike). Present access is across the fields when passable.

History Topography: The old access-road trace is the only historic feature discernable around the site. The road passes in front of the NW elevation, about 75' distant, and then vanishes as it approaches the lake approximately 250' beyond the house.

Outbuildings: No outbuildings remain standing; however, several foundations (stone) were located and could for the most part be identified. Bearings are given as true bearings. When identified, foundation dimensions are rough.

A circular icehouse stood bearing S56°E approximately 52' off the east corner of the house. Foundation diameter is 12'.

The corner only remains of an unidentified building bearing S3°E, 74' from the south corner.

The foundations of an unidentified building remain, bearing S71°W about 210' from the west corner. The uncovering by metal detector of numerous and varied iron objects would suggest a use of blacksmith or machine shop. The plan was L-form measuring 30' by 25' along NW and NE sides, and 15' across each end of the "L" (SW and SE).

A springhouse stood in the ravine northwest of the house, bearing N34°W, 270' from the north corner. Its foundations measure 12' by 13'.

Barn foundations are located roughly 320' from the house beyond the springhouse on the same bearing. Dimensions are 32' by 36'.

PART III. PROJECT INFORMATION

This documentation was developed in 1977 by Richard P. Thomsen, Jr., of the Graduate Architectural History program at the University of Virginia, under the direction of K. Edward Lay, Assistant Dean. It was donated to the Historic American Buildings Survey, and was not completed under HABS supervision, nor edited by HABS staff.